

2012

Dramatic Choices in Measure for Measure

Johanna Evans
Lehigh University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Evans, Johanna, "Dramatic Choices in Measure for Measure" (2012). *Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1174.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.

Dramatic Choices in *Measure for Measure*

By

Johanna Evans

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

English Literature

Lehigh University

April 27, 2012

Copyright

Johanna Evans

Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of (Arts
in English Literature.

Dramatic Choices in *Measure for Measure*

Johanna Evans

Date Approved

Barbara Traister
Advisor

Scott Gordon
Department Chair Person

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Dramatic Choices in <i>Measure for Measure</i>	2
Works Cited.....	34
Bibliography.....	35
Biography.....	36

Abstract

Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, a play greatly interested in patriarchal authority, has stymied feminist critics. Reading Isabella as either an independent feminist or as disappointingly submissive dependant on men hinges on the interpretation of the final scene, in which it is unclear whether she accepts the Duke's marriage proposal. I will argue that the ambiguous ending gives us something more satisfying—Shakespeare immortalizes Isabella as a woman who is always about to choose, thereby emphasizing her agency and power. While some critics interpret Isabella's compliance with the Duke's plan as subservient, I believe that she may actually be acting out of self-interest (and trusting the Duke-friar when he tells her that he has her interests at heart). I will construct a feminist reading based upon this revised understanding of Isabella and on an analysis of the ways Shakespeare unnerves his audience regarding the Duke (and patriarchal authority).

Dramatic Choices in *Measure for Measure*

Shakespeare does not unequivocally endorse what Claudio in *Measure for Measure* calls ‘the demigod Authority’ (1.2.100). If to the guilty, publicly disgraced Angelo, the ruler, in his ability to perceive what is hidden, appears to be ‘like power divine’ (5.1.361), to the irrepressible libertine Lucio he is the ‘old fantastical Duke of dark corners’ (4.3.146-147). The play does not allow one to choose one or the other image or even to settle somewhere in between. Instead, as generations of audiences have attested, Shakespeare’s “problem comedy” elicits a strange, uncomfortable response... (Greenblatt 17)

This quote comes from the opening chapter of *Shakespeare’s Freedom*, Greenblatt’s popular book of criticism which attempts to tackle how Shakespeare navigates the relationship between art, authority, and autonomy. In *Measure for Measure*, he is particularly interested in the character of Barnardine, who makes a memorable, unselfconscious stand against authority—and if one were trying to understand authority and autonomy in the broadest way, he would be the character to examine.

However, my goal with this paper is not as ambitious as Greenblatt’s. I will narrow my discussion to the way patriarchal authority is exercised over women in *Measure for Measure*. I believe that the two faces of authority which Greenblatt identifies—a divine power on one hand and the “Duke of dark corners” (IV.iii.146-147) on the other—are important to this discussion, but I don’t believe that Shakespeare ever invited us to choose between the two. It is a case of both/and rather than either/or. Isabella’s task at the end of this problem play is to recognize that patriarchal authority is *both* an outward show of power *and* an underhanded manipulation of people with a promise of their best interests at heart—and with that recognition, to make practical choices that affect her life.

I am, of course, referring to the ending of the play, which with Isabella’s silence and lack of stage directions is simultaneously opaque and full of possibilities. In a 1950

production, Peter Brook “could only realize his vision through major reshaping of the text” (“*M for M* in Performance”). This reshaping involved cutting the Duke’s “prolonged deception of Isabella in Act V and his outright proposal of marriage,” allowing the Duke to embody authority and human warmth without arousing the audience’s suspicion or disgust. The 1970 RSC production also challenged the tradition of Isabella’s understood acceptance of the Duke: “Barton’s concept resulted in a shocking yet innovative final scene: Isabella neither rejected nor accepted the Duke’s final proposal, but instead started silently into the audience” (“*M for M* in Performance”). This staging maintains the purity of the text, but allows Isabella’s silence to speak volumes. Simon McBurney’s 2004 production at the Royal National Theatre followed through on the usual assumption that Isabella and the Duke pair off, but he does not leave us feeling like *Measure for Measure* is a comedy in any sense: “The Duke’s line ‘what is yours is mine’ (V.i.539) took on pointed significance when a scrim flew off to reveal ‘a small white room containing only one thing: a bed, with a rose on a pillow’” (“*M for M* in Performance”).

The gradual evolution of these productions—from refusal to depict the unsettling proposal, to Isabella’s furious refusal to answer it at all, to Isabella’s trapped feeling of forced compliance—show that we as a directing community (and as an attending audience) are becoming more interested in how Isabella’s reaction to the Duke’s proposal affects our opinion of his authority—as warm and paternal in 1950, as crafty and resourceful in 1970, and as evilly totalitarian in 2004. But in order to better understand the forces acting on Isabella in these last moments of the play, we need to closely examine the text from start to finish.

Particularly, we need to understand how the Duke's power works in reference to marriage and chastity—areas which directly involve his power over Vienna's women. We need to examine how the Duke uses Angelo's love for power to make his own manipulation of authority seem less menacing. And most importantly, we need to closely monitor Isabella's reaction to the Duke-disguised-as-friar, as this will tell us whether she is blindly following her male superiors, or is too eager to believe that those male superiors could put her interests before their own.

Virility and Virginit

I would like to begin with an analysis of the meaning and sources of power at the beginning of the play. One obvious source is the legal authority embodied in the Duke and Angelo's good cop/bad cop routine. The Duke, having realized that his tolerance of venial sins is leading Vienna down a slippery slope ("Now as fond fathers, Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch...in time the rod Becomes more mock'd than fear'd" [I.iii.23-27]) acknowledges the importance of reinforcing the old laws. Critics have acknowledged that this is not only intended as a general demonstration of power, but that the specific law the Duke desires to enforce has significant patriarchal ties. As Barbara Baines describes, "Strict enforcement of *any* law would strengthen the ruler's authority, but society's disregard for the laws that mandate chastity is critical for the Duke specifically because chastity assures legitimacy, and legitimacy authorizes patriarchy" (285). The authority figure in the play establishes for the audience from the beginning that there is reason to be anxious about patriarchy's hold on Vienna, so that subsequent actions in the play will be viewed through the lens of this anxiety—the audience will be particularly sensitive to the ways that power and gender interact.

Given that the problem of bastardy was not confined to this fictional Vienna, but was also a concern to Shakespeare's English audience, it might be a surprise that the Duke claims it is necessary to leave town while the old law is reinstated. Though the Duke projects a false modesty to Angelo, he readily admits to Friar Thomas that he intends for Angelo to take the credit (blame) for the harsh return of the law. The Duke says,

Sith 'twas my fault to give the people scope
Twould be my tyranny to strike and gall them
For what I bid them do...
...Therefore, indeed, my father,
I have on Angelo impos'd the office
Who may in th'ambush of my name strike home,
And yet my nature never in the fight
To do in slander. (I.iii.34-43)

The two phrases on which the import of this passage hinge are "th'ambush of my name" and "my nature." The Duke predicts that the Viennese will see Angelo's harsh redeployment of justice as taking advantage of his place in power to demonstrate either his qualification for the job or an opportunity to mercilessly sentence those who do not share his icy, seemingly asexual disposition. In other words, the Viennese people will perceive the difference between the Duke and Angelo acting in the Duke's name, and rather than blame the Duke or the ducal right to punish the people so harshly, they will blame Angelo directly. In this way, the Duke escapes personal slander—but it is not his name that he seeks to protect, but his nature.

This "nature" could be seen as something that is even more intimately tied to Vincentio than his name, or it could be something that extends beyond him. It could be the "nature" of the head patriarch, on which all local patriarchs (ex. fathers) rely for their power, which the Duke is trying to protect. By convincing the people that the stringent law is not being imposed by their friendly, fatherly Duke, the patriarchy is able not only to avoid attaching to itself to characteristics of strictness and mercilessness, but is also able to disguise

how the patriarchy is the absolute beneficiary of the law. When we think about the ways patriarchy is employed in our own culture, let us remember that just because one hand feeds us doesn't mean the other hand can't hit us—we should be ready to bite either, if necessary.

The other main source of power in *Measure for Measure* is one which both buttresses patriarchy and has the potential to resist it: chastity. Baines, whom I have already mentioned, fully describes the dual role chastity fills in the patriarchal system. It guarantees legitimacy, which channels property to only a select and socially sanctioned pool of offspring. It also is a source of power for women. Baines writes, “The chastity that the nunnery protects is thus a form of freedom, the only form of autonomy left for women in a world where sexuality means submission to men and degradation in that submission” (287). Isabella's first words in the play (“And have you nuns no farther privileges?” [I.iv.1]) are highly revealing in this regard. Her entrance into the convent, the audience may already recognize, is perhaps not motivated by faith so much as by a desire to hold onto whatever power women can achieve in this particular world.

While Baines and others read this conversation as earnest and believe Isabella in her assertion that she wants the harshest restrictions the nuns can impose, so as to better protect her chastity, I believe that Isabella's readiness to temporarily leave the convent to plead for her brother may reveal that she is not merely interested in the convent as a chastity-fortress, but also in the nuns' independence from society and the autonomy that might afford. Her question, “Have you no farther privileges?” may be one of disappointment, and her insistence that she speaks “not as desiring more” (I.iv.3) may be an embarrassed and disingenuous cover. I believe that Isabella, in this scene, gives us a reason to believe that she does, indeed, desire more “privileges” than the “strict restraint” (I.iv. 4) the sisterhood has to offer.

Some of her disappointment may come from an expectation that her virginity/chastity has a sizable exchange value, and that she will be throwing this bargaining chip away in a convent. While the convent might guarantee protection against sexual submission, it does not allow her to exploit the asset of her virginity to its fullest. In this play, chastity not only holds a measurable social power, but the male characters attribute to virginity an almost magical quality. Virginity does not operate on a merely sociopolitical plane—it can bolster an emotional appeal, it can charm, it can seduce. Claudio first urges Lucio to seek his sister’s help because he believes that “in her youth/There is a prone and speechless dialect/Such as move men” (I.ii.172-174), and only secondarily mentions her rhetorical skill. Virginity has a rhetoric of its own. When Lucio seeks out Isabella, he admits that though he often tries to deceive maids, he considers her “an immortal spirit,/And to be talk’d with in sincerity,/As with a saint” (I.iv.34-36). He further instructs her that “when maidens sue/ Men give like gods” (I.iv.80-81). But Lucio is not thorough in his explanation of this phenomenon—namely, that men give like gods in the hopes of possessing those virgin jewels, in the hopes of absorbing some of that immortal spirit for themselves.

So, what happens when the patriarchal power and the power of the virgin collide? Do the patriarchs give like gods?

“This virtuous maid subdues me quite”

Act Two begins with a glimpse of how Angelo deals with the unchaste before we see his confrontation with the “very virtuous maid” (II.ii.20). The audience views Angelo from the beginning as a patriarch who takes the show of authority very seriously. Angelo opens Act II with the words: “We must not make a scarecrow of the law,/ setting it up to fear the

birds of prey,/ And let it keep one shape till custom make it/ Their perch, and not their terror” (II.ii.1-4). Given the similarity between this message and the Duke’s own assessment of the current situation, the audience feels that Angelo, indeed, might be the right man for the job, and that there might be a seamless transition of authority between the Duke and his second, while the former is out of town. But we also learn that Angelo’s desire to make an impression and to prove his authority is perhaps leading him to make unwise choices. Despite multiple pleas from his second hand, Escalus, to spare Claudio’s life, Angelo is unmoved, and announces his self-righteous position to the audience and everyone within earshot:

‘Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall...
You may not so extenuate his offence
For I have had such faults; but rather tell me,
When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgment pattern out my death,
And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must die. (II.ii.17-31)

On the one hand, this speech describes a vision of authority which relies on a common vision of justice, in which the figurehead of that authority is equally subject to the law. Angelo, though unforgiving and merciless, seems to have an attitude toward authority that is more admirable than the Duke’s. While the Duke admits to setting up Angelo as his Darth Vader so as to protect his image as a warm and shining paternal figure, Angelo seems unconcerned with using his position of authority in any underhanded way for his own benefit. He seems to believe that his commitment to justice will be enough to impress people and earn him power.

However, I should note that Angelo’s confidence in stating that if he falls his “own judgment should pattern out [his] death” is based upon his assumption that he will never fall as Claudio has fallen. The Duke establishes Angelo’s coldness in Act I, and his merciless treatment of Claudio confirms this. But we should note that when Angelo remarks, “It is one

thing to be tempted, Escalus, It is another thing to fall” (II.ii.17-18), it is possible that Angelo is not actually speaking from a position of authority on the subject. It is possible that Angelo has never been tempted before, and that therefore it was never possible that he could fall—until he meets Isabella, his match in more ways than one.

While Angelo, bored, leaves the sentencing of the bawds to Escalus, he is interested enough in Claudio’s case to entertain Isabella’s pleas. Lucio enters with Isabella and quietly urges her on, telling her at first that she is “too cold” (II.ii.45) and cheering her on with “Oh, to him, to him wench!” (II.ii.125) as she warms up. The language of hot and cold was often used to describe the differing humors between men and women; women were cold and moist, and men were hot and dry (Fletcher 68). One could see in Lucio’s accusation that Isabella is at first “too cold” not only a desire to see her more emphatic in her emotional plea for her brother’s life, but also a desire for her to be more firm and manly (hot) in her rhetoric. As she begins to make more ambitious arguments against Angelo, he addresses her as “wench.” This could be a reflection of his excitement over the argument, but it may also indicate that while a quiet nun should be addressed as a “saint” (I.iv.36), the same woman when demonstrating her wit may be addressed much less formally—the appellation “wench” colors her as wanton. Although we cannot be certain that Lucio’s reaction to Isabella will be the same as Angelo’s, Lucio’s commentary at least gives the audience one male perspective on her powerful combination of masculine (logic) and feminine (innocence) virtues.

And, interestingly, some of the content of Isabella’s arguments, while she is in this vein of presuming to match Angelo’s wit, accuses *him* of presuming to take on the power of judgment which rightfully belongs to God. She says to him,

But man, proud man,
Dress’d in a little brief authority,

Most ignorant of what he most assur'd—
His glassy essence—like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal. (II.ii.118-124)

We could draw two parallels in this speech to the gender conflict present in this play. The first could be that this speech serves as an accusation against men for dressing themselves “in a little brief authority” over women, when in fact both men and women alike will be judged by God. However, Angelo could hear this speech and wonder that Isabella is so bold as to assume any advantage that would convince him to change her brother’s sentence. The question is, who is presuming more? Some of the answer to this question would depend on the way a director imagines Angelo should be played—is he honestly impressed and moved by Isabella, or can his response be reduced to something like, “You’re cute when you’re angry!”?

I think that, insofar as her virginity really does possess a mystical power, the audience associates her unusual rhetorical abilities with her chastity. Angelo is seduced by her virtue—the combined virtue of her chastity and her intelligence. After Isabella takes her leave, Angelo reflects to himself:

...Can it be
That modesty may more betray our sense
Than woman’s lightness? Having waste ground enough,
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there?...
...What, do I love her
That I desire to hear her speak again?
And feast upon her eyes? What is’t I dream on?...
...but this virtuous maid
Subdues me quite. (II.ii.168-186)

His speech reveals ambivalence about his feelings for Isabella. On the one hand, he seems to admire her and to revel in that admiration. Before he mentions an urge to “feast upon her

eyes,” he surmises that he must “love her” because of his “desire to hear her speak again.” In other words, he notes her virtue as embodied in her voice, in that which she projects outward, and not just as a physical characteristic of her body. He also seems aware that to sexually dominate her would be to “raze the sanctuary”—it would not merely be an act of selfish pleasure, a sin, the possession of a good woman. It would be a destructive conquest against her virtue, and he even seems to acknowledge that this might be one of the primary sources of his carnal desire. The fact that she “subdues” him with her virtue may translate into a need to subdue her back, in order to reassert his masculinity¹.

When Angelo and Isabella face each other again in scene four of Act II, the audience relishes the confusion of Angelo’s lusty innuendos and Isabella’s innocent misunderstanding. Isabella, responding earnestly to Angelo’s insinuation that “women are frail too” (II.iv.123), suggests that it is unfair for men to judge women’s frailty when “Men their creation mar/ In profiting by them” (II.iv.126-127). In other words, when men take advantage of women, they are only harming themselves, since women are reflections of men just as man is a reflection of God. Although no rape actually occurs in *Measure for Measure*, we can see how *Titus Andronicus* demonstrates this point—namely, that Titus’s partial responsibility for Lavinia’s rape and for supporting a system which allows such a crime to occur ultimately result in *his* suffering.

Some of Isabella’s speech about women’s frailty serves as a comic deflection of Angelo’s intended line of discussion, since she seems blind to his suggestion that she herself could be so frail. When Angelo finally loses patience, he tries to put his intentions in the plainest language he can. He says to Isabella:

¹ As Barbara Baines puts it, “By robbing Isabella of her chastity as he robbed Mariana of her reputation, Angelo hopes to regain his position of male dominance—to transfer, that is, the image of feminine subjugation from himself to Isabella (293).”

...Be that you are,
That is, a woman; if you be more, you're none.
If you be one—as you are well express'd
By all external warrants—show it now,
By putting on the destin'd livery. (II.iv.133-137)

Here, Angelo entreats Isabella to fulfill her feminine role and submit to his will. Furthermore, he insists that if she be anything “more” than a woman, if she pretends to be an angel and refuses to submit, then she is “none.” Although it may seem that I am simplifying this too much, he in effect pronounces that it is impossible to be a woman and sexually independent at the same time—that she is “none” if she does not obey the expectations of her gender. What is unfair about his analysis is that it is commonly believed that women deserve to be subdued by men because they are weaker and more prone to desires of the flesh than men, but here Angelo suggests that any pretention toward masculine virtues of restraint will reflect as badly on her as womanly weakness would.

Angelo's Offer and the Traffic in Women

He summarizes his offer: “Redeem thy brother/By yielding up thy body to my will” (II.iv.162-163). Barbara Baines analyzes Isabella's dilemma as basically one between her own independence and power, and her duty as a woman toward the males in her family. However, I would like to examine Isabella's situation not as a dilemma, but as reflection of the expected exchange of women's bodies for the advantage of their male relatives. When Isabella reflects to herself, “More than our brother is our chastity” (II.iv.184), she is not making a simple, pragmatic judgment—that it is better for her brother to die once than for her to burn in hell forever. After all, it is just as likely that she could be forgiven for her sin as that her brother could be forgiven for his. Rather, Isabella is making a judgment that her

family would value her chastity more than her brother's life, since the preservation of her father and brother's reputations demands the preservation of her virtue. When she uses the word "our" to describe her "chastity," she is demonstrating to the audience that she is not being selfish or unfair in her decision to refuse Angelo—rather, she is merely following what the patriarchy expects of her, to the best of her ability.

Likewise, Claudio's plea that she accept Angelo's bargain is not one that unequivocally prioritizes patriarchal values—in some ways, Claudio's request rejects the demands of patriarchy as much as his pursuit of sexual desires without the official marriage sanctions. Ironically, it is the woman in his family who upholds the patriarchal values, and it is the brother who flaunts them. Angelo tries to harness for his own benefit the patriarchal expectation that a woman traffic her body for her brother's gain, the way a woman would be sold in marriage to a man that would best secure political and monetary advantages for her male relations. However, Isabella bypasses these earthly considerations and argues that patriarchy depends on the honor of men and women, and that to uphold the patriarchy, she must uphold her honor.

I could leave things here, if I wanted to take Isabella directly at her word. However, just as I am reluctant to interpret Isabella's interaction at the nunnery as completely earnest, I am also ready to see her adoption of patriarchal values in this case as suspiciously convenient. For example, she could just as easily have justified accepting Angelo's bargain and saving her brother, to preserve the patriline. What makes Isabella a rich character is her ambivalence toward patriarchy. She recognizes the ways that it benefits her (the value placed on her chastity gives her power and justifies her choice to refuse Angelo), but she also feels its imprisonment of her (the only sure way to achieve independence is to cloister herself

entirely, and as Angelo points out no one will believe a woman's testimony over a man's). This ambivalence, combined with her natural human self interest, manifests in her slowly evolving list of reasons for refusing Angelo's request. When she finally comes around to telling Claudio about Angelo's proposal, she humorously remarks, "O, were it but my life,/ I'd throw it down for your deliverance,/ As frankly as a pin" (III.i.103-105). It is unclear how this line should be played—it could either be an honest, though melodramatic and naïve, declaration of sisterly love, or it could be a somewhat self-conscious and safe promise she would not have to keep. Although Claudio initially agrees with Isabella about Angelo's despicable bargain, he turns around to beg her to save his life. She then uses her rhetorical prowess against her brother and argues, "Is't not a kind of incest, to take life/ From thine own sister's shame" (III.i.138-139). Though there is a great difference between lawful marriage and unsanctioned sex, I think that Isabella's incest metaphor holds up even in a traditional trafficking situation, in which a sister's advantageous match (and/or sexual submission) would do a brother good. But this argument, of all the arguments she makes in favor of her choice to preserve her chastity, is perhaps the most farfetched.

When she explains her case to the disguised Duke, she raises a new point—that she does not want her son to be a bastard. While she presented extreme arguments to her brother, to an outsider she can admit practical concerns about an arrangement with Angelo. We could read this series of arguments as a peeling back of ideological justifications for what is, essentially, a practical, earthly problem—that if she yields, she will lose her reputation and possibly end up imprisoned and with a bastard child, like Julietta. We could also read the ideological and practical arguments as equal in weight—just as all concerns of gender relations are both practical and ideological.

What is interesting to me is that there is something about the friar (the Duke) which draws out this very earthly, practical concern which till now Isabella has not felt the need to articulate. There is something about him which either demands a more complete honesty, or which allows her to trust that her self-concern will be heard generously, in a way that even her own brother might not have been willing to hear. He is a confessor, after all.

“Be Rul’d by Him”

Duke Vincentio exchanges conversation with all three of the damsels in distress, Julietta, Mariana, and Isabella. As this head patriarch embodies broader qualities of the whole patriarchal system, in these scenes the audience grasps the subtler cruelties that patriarchy enacts on the ‘weaker’ sex. The Duke levies one of his most misogynistic comments at Julietta’s door; their conversation touches on what Claudio earlier described as “mutual entertainment” (I.iv.143):

Duke: Love you the man that wrong’d you?
Juliet: Yes, as I love the woman that wrong’d him.
Duke: So then it seems your most offenceful act
Was mutually committed?
Juliet: Mutually.
Duke: Then was your sin of heavier kind than his.
Juliet: I do confess it, and repent it, father.
Duke: ‘Tis meet so, daughter; but lest you do repent...
Juliet: I do repent me as it is an evil,
And take the shame with joy. (II.iii.24-36)

Since the mutual sexual pleasure of married couples was encouraged for the sake of increasing chances of conception we should not read this as an explicit condemnation of female sexual pleasure. Rather, the fact that the sex was “mutual entertainment” would increase the chances that a bastard child would result—and reducing the rate of illegitimacy seems to be this patriarch’s primary goal. Barbara Baines writes, “The Duke’s judgment of

Juliet is not simply an expression of a male chauvinist's double standard (as Rieffer suggests) but an acknowledgment of a patriarchal society's dependence upon women's chastity" (286-287). Furthermore, Juliet's responses to the Duke are not as compliant, perhaps, as they first appear. She may be ready to admit that her sin was heavier since her pleasure will cost Claudio his life and since it is women's responsibility to guard their chastity, but in her insistence that she takes "the shame with joy," Juliet shows that the motherhood—whether of a bastard or not—trumps patriarchal values, in her eyes. She is ready to accept that she should repent, as a formality, but she is not sorry that their mutual love will result in the birth of a child, especially considering Claudio's firm promise to marry her.

The Duke's arrangement with Mariana and Isabella, and the sheepish willingness with which Isabella follows the plan, produces more dismay in critics than his exchange with Juliet. Rieffer's language on the matter is strong: "Whatever autonomy possessed in the beginning of the play, whatever 'truth of spirit' she abided by, disintegrates once she agrees to observe the Duke's plan. As soon as this 'friar' takes over, Isabella becomes an actress whose words are no longer her own" (165). While the sentiment behind Rieffer's critique resonates with my own emotional reaction to the second half of this play, I don't believe this complaint offers much in the quest to dissect patriarchy and maybe someday dismantle it. For example, the fact that the Duke is disguised as a friar is extremely significant in regard to his relationship with Isabella. Her obedience to the friar stems from her desire to be admitted to the nunnery and her belief that she should obey those above her in the religious hierarchy.

But I do not believe that Isabella's submission to the Duke necessarily signals her surrender to seemingly unavoidable masculine domination. Rather, I believe that in the course of Acts Four and Five, she believes that she is acting in her own self-interest, and in

Mariana's best interest. What leaves the audience unsettled is the knowledge that what appears to Isabella as women's best interest is actually the Duke's best interest. She wants to rescue herself and Mariana from shame and welcomes the Duke's help in this endeavor, but she fails to recognize that the Duke himself is the primary advocate for the system that demands their shame in the first place. When the Duke encounters Mariana, he says to her, "...may be I will call upon you for some advantage to yourself" (IV.i.23-24) to which she responds, "I am always bound to you" (IV.i.25). Rather than attach more significance than is due to Mariana's response, I suggest that we take her at her word—she believes that the friar has her best interest at heart, and no ulterior motive.

Measure for Measure, as a play, seems extremely preoccupied with the conflict between people's self-interests, and between one's self interest and the interest of the state. For example, Angelo's primary conflict is between pursuing what the state considers justice (condemning extramarital sex) and his own selfish desire for Isabella. The Duke's punishment of Lucio is fueled both by his own hurt pride and by the state's need to punish sexual offenders. In considering Isabella's compliance with the Duke's plan, the audience would not see it as a simple switch from committed defiance of male power to happy, quiet acceptance. The audience would be aware that Isabella is following her own self interest in this case, just as she did in her interactions with Angelo and Claudio. When the Duke tells Isabella that her brother is dead, he proposes a way for her to achieve her revenge:

If you can pace your wisdom
In that good path that I would wish it go,
And you shall have your bosom on this wretch,
Graces to the Duke, revenges to your heart,
And general honour.
Isabella: I am direct'd by you. (IV.iii.132-136)

It is true that here the Duke clearly reveals his own stake in the outcome of these events (“In that good path I would wish it go”), but he places three times as much emphasis on the benefits to Isabella. What we may blame Isabella for is not her sudden subservience to male authority, but that she too easily invests in the Duke’s idea of what is in her best interest.

In terms of the form of this passage, Isabella’s short line supplements the Duke’s speech. This formal pattern occurs several times in the play—here, in the exchange with Mariana cited above, and in Mariana’s response to Isabella’s report of the Duke’s letter, which I will discuss shortly. We could interpret this structure as symbolic of the Duke’s partnership with the women—they complete his speech and join him with his purpose. In order to give the impression that the short response is a completion of the previous line, it must be delivered quickly. It could be directed in such a way that the woman is always already compliant, and that when the Duke invites her answer with the short line, she automatically delivers her acquiescence. A director could also decide to use this quickly delivered short line as an opportunity to demonstrate the women’s eagerness to use whatever means are available to them to achieve their ends. The Duke’s promise to transform her situation of frustration, heartbreak, and powerlessness into one of revenge, honour, power and rewards is too tempting to resist. While she may have chosen to accept the Duke’s guidance, and while this may compromise our understanding of her as totally independent, her commitment to achieving what is best for her complicates our understanding of the decisions she makes under the Duke’s guidance.

To a certain degree, it is hard to judge how Isabella bears up under the Duke’s instructions, because two key exchanges occur offstage. The first is the conversation between Isabella and Mariana, in which the former explains that the latter should go to bed with

Angelo. The way Isabella would explain this mission to Mariana would reveal a great deal about Isabella's attitude toward the plan, but Shakespeare denies the audience access to this scene. While this does to a degree erase Isabella's voice from the planning procedure, the audience is still aware that the conversation must have occurred. The absence of the women's conversation creates a certain mystery, but it also grants them a degree of autonomy. Yes, the audience is denied access to this example of female plotting—but so is the Duke. His presence on stage is an explicit reminder that there is a conversation going on, between two women, the contents of which he can only guess. Rather than view this scene as an erasure of female agency, we can see it as a demonstration of the possibility of resistance.

The second key omitted scene comes in the form of a letter from the Duke to Isabella which she never reads aloud. She alludes to its contents in her conversation with Mariana:

Isabella: To speak so indirectly I am loth;
I would say truth, but to accuse him so
That is your part; yet I am advised to do it,
He says, to veil my purpose. (IV.vi.1-4)
Mariana: Be rul'd by him.

While it is tempting to draw one's complete attention to Mariana's words, I would like to analyze Isabella's report. Between the semicolons there is an interruption of her statement, which otherwise would read "To speak indirectly I am loth, yet I am advised to do it..." What the interruption adds is a second layer to her compliance with the Duke's advice—before considering that the Duke "advised" her to "speak so indirectly," she cites her concern for Mariana as a reason not to tell the whole truth. Isabella recognizes that it is not her place to make public declarations about Angelo and Mariana's tryst. Mariana's short line "Be rul'd by him" may not be a command for Isabella's general conduct with him. Rather, Mariana might see ways that the Duke's advice serves her end.

It is difficult to determine what purpose her public shaming serves, just as it is difficult to determine why the Duke feels it is necessary to lie about Claudio's fate. But while these two pieces of the Duke's plan don't seem to make sense separately, they may make sense together. The Duke, in an aside, tells the audience that he will withhold Claudio's escape so as "To make her heavenly comforts of despair/ When it is least expected" (IV. iii. 109-110). But there doesn't seem to be a good reason why he won't appear the knight in shining armor just as effectively by revealing his identity and his help to her brother immediately.

It seems to me that there must be another reason why delaying the truth serves the Duke, and that her public declaration is tied to that purpose. Isabella's anger toward Angelo over her brother's death is so fierce that she is ready to trust the disguised Duke's promise that if she "follows the path [he] would wish it go" (IV.iii.133) then she will achieve her revenge. Although she acknowledges her doubts about the plan to Mariana, she is convinced that the friar is pursuing the same end that she is. Perhaps her trust in him is based solely on his position as a spiritual leader. Perhaps it is based upon his trust in her own moral judgment, as revealed by his first address to her: "The hand that hath made you fair hath made you good" (III.i.179). It is probably a combination of the two. But her trust in him alone might not be enough to get her to jump through any hoop he sets before her—her motivation to shame herself publicly is much stronger than obedience. She is motivated by a desire for justice, for her brother's death and for Mariana.

So, if we embrace the idea that Claudio's supposed death fuels Isabella's vengeful desire to make a public declaration against Angelo—and that the Duke anticipates this—it becomes increasingly important for us to imagine why the Duke desires for her to make this

declaration. What does he gain by this? A simple explanation would be that he demonstrates to Isabella his power over her. He has the power to convince her to act in ways she herself would not act. Fear or admiration of this power could convince her to marry him—and marriage to Isabella would probably solve many of the Duke’s problems, such as needing to produce an heir and needing to quash the rumors that he “would eat mutton on Fridays” (III.ii.175).

He could also be testing Isabella. Let us not forget that, in terms of obedience to men, the Friar/Duke is the exception for Isabella, not the rule. The Duke’s proposal to Isabella seems textually sudden, but if his growing admiration and affection toward her were directed in his body language, then we could see the Duke’s interactions with Isabella in the latter half of the play as auditioning her for the role of duchess, and that the sort of wife the head patriarch needs is a virtuous and obedient one. While a reading of this play which allegorizes the Duke as a God figure might see him as trying to teach Isabella a lesson about humility, and while such a reading might describe this as a kindly, fatherly gesture, it is also clear that any such lesson being taught will benefit the Duke materially more than it will benefit Isabella spiritually.

But I believe that the purpose of convincing Isabella to publicly shame herself is to put her in a position where marriage might look more attractive than joining the nunnery.

Anthony Fletcher writes in “Men’s Dilemmas” that:

there was probably some growing understanding during the seventeenth century, at least among the better educated, that force was usually counterproductive and that patriarchal authority had to be exercised by persuasion and negotiation. A new framework for gender relationships was needed, a framework which rested on something more than, or something different from, God’s word in scripture and a tradition which condoned male power and the use of force. (81)

Measure for Measure may have been a forerunner in the trend which Fletcher describes. The Duke cannot reasonably expect to succeed in his objective of appearing the pure and benevolent patriarch if he *forces* Isabella to marry him. Rather, he must persuade her on multiple fronts that marriage to him would be in her best interest. By announcing publicly that she has had sexual dealings with a man, Isabella sullies her reputation at least as much as Mariana's was by her broken engagement with Angelo. The Duke persuades Isabella that marriage to Angelo will restore Mariana's place in society—marriage to the Duke would do the same for Isabella.

But it could be that the Duke misunderstands Isabella's trust in him. She may not trust and obey a secular man the way she would a spiritual superior, and furthermore, by understanding the extent of his deceit, she may learn to doubt his sincerity when he assures her he has her best interests at heart.

“What's mine is yours, what is yours is mine.”

Although we may be perplexed by Isabella's decision to publicly shame herself, she does have an opportunity to make some inflammatory remarks against a high-ranking male authority. “Hear me! O hear me, hear!” (V.i.34) she begs the Duke, Angelo, Vienna, and the audience. And we do hear her. She accuses Angelo of being a “murderer,” “an adulterous thief,” “an hypocrite, a virgin-violator” (V.i.41-44) and furthermore echoes one of Angelo's earlier jabs at her:

...even so may Angelo,
In all his dressings, caracts, titles, forms,
Be an arch-villain. Believe it, royal Prince,
If he be less, he's nothing; but he's more,
Had I more name for badness. (V.i.58-62)

She turns against Angelo his accusation that for her to be more than woman is to be nothing, here implying that he is nothing if he is less than a villain, nearly implying by parallel analogy that to be a man is to be a villain².

While the Duke's (pretended) refusal to listen to Isabella and her "patience" (V.i.119) with him are distressing to a feminist audience, what is more vexing is the Duke's and Angelo's insistence that women would not choose to speak out so vehemently without being "instruments of some more mightier member" (V.i.236). The Duke may have practical motives for suggesting there is a master planner, but the public nature of this 'trial' gives all of his statements an air of official policy. He seems to be establishing that, as a matter of course, women are incapable of acting alone.

If we consider that, up until this point Isabella has assumed that she is acting in her own self interest and that the 'friar' was working toward her interest too, the revelation that Friar Lodowick was actually the Duke, and that furthermore he thinks of himself as the "someone" who set her on, could be pretty jarring for Isabella. Riefer and Baines, I believe, have made convincing arguments for why we as the audience might be disappointed by her actions in Act IV and V. However, I do not imagine that Isabella has viewed *herself* as submissive and compliant with the patriarchal plan. Discovering the Duke's duplicity and the degree of his control over her life could change her perspective on the best way for her to obtain and use power in this world. Isabella's final line could illustrate this change. In her plea for mercy on Angelo, she concludes, "Thoughts are no subjects; Intents, but merely

² Mariana, soon afterward, is placed under the same logic. The Duke asks if she is "married," "a maid," or "a widow" and concludes, "Why you are nothing, then! Neither maid, widow, nor wife!" (V.i.172-179). The Duke immediately silences Lucio's objection that the Duke has ignored a category—punks—perhaps because, officially, the state must consider it impossible for women to be sexually independent.

thoughts” (V.i.451-452). While in her own mind, in her “thoughts,” she was a subject, in reality she was an object, one of the Duke’s pawns.

Due to the possibly earth-shattering nature of the Duke’s unmasking and her realization that she had much less agency than she imagined, the Isabella from Act V might receive the Duke’s proposal differently than the Isabella from Act I. The Duke makes his offer of marriage twice, but he does not receive an answer either time. The first time he tenders his proposal, it is in the same breath in which he pardons Claudio:

If he be like your brother, for his sake
Is he pardon’d; and for your lovely sake
Give me your hand and say you will be mine.
He is my brother too: but fitter time for that. (V.i.488-491)

Brushing aside the hint of a cruel bargain reminiscent of Angelo’s and the hint of an assumption that she will accept him, we find that the Duke again tries to influence Isabella with language that suggests it is *her* interest that he intends to serve, and not his own. And to some degree, it is in her interest—her public declaration of giving it up to Angelo has rendered her virtue partially compromised, and the Duke chivalrously offers to ‘redeem’ her. But now that Isabella has realized that the Duke has been manipulating her all along in the name of her “lovely sake,” she may be suspicious of his offer. After the colon (“For he is my brother too:...””) the Duke may expect her to supply another of her short lines of acquiescence. When she does not, he continues on and says “but fitter time for that.”

After this proposal and before the one which closes the play, the Duke turns his attention to the licentious Lucio. While Lucio’s purpose in the play is largely one of comic relief, the Duke’s sentencing of him does add an interesting layer to the final moments of Act V. The joke in the Lucio-Duke interplay is the idea that being a cuckold is a fate worse than death—though given the lengths to which the Duke has gone to ensure the reinstatement of

the old laws, perhaps to those within the play this is not a laughing matter. It is not cuckoldry that makes the audience laugh—it is the carefree way that both characters talk of death which gives these few lines an almost Monty Python-like flavor of absurdity. Lucio seems to almost freely admit that he deserves to be whipped for his slander, and the Duke tosses off a response, “Whipp’d first, sir, and hang’d after” (V.1.505). He further compounds Lucio’s death sentence with a command that he marry the prostitute mother of his bastard, saying “The nuptial finish’d, Let him be whipp’d and hang’d” (V.1.514-515).

The comedy continues as Lucio begs in prose for the marriage sentence to be removed, though he seems to make no complaint about his impending torture and death, but the Duke resolutely declares, “Upon mine honour, thou shalt marry her” (V.1.516). This statement reflects the Duke’s desire to quash the rumors Lucio has been spreading, but it also relates to the fact that patriarchal authority is dependent upon the production of legitimate heirs—in a way, the honor of the new project begun with the reinstatement of the laws depends upon a successful sentencing of Lucio, the presumed ideal victim of the laws, especially considering Claudio’s escape from these laws. The Duke cannot afford to let Claudio go without replacing him with a proper transgressor.

What is most important about this exchange between Lucio and the Duke, in reference to its place between the two proposals to Isabella, is how it demonstrates the extent of his power. While the Duke’s rescuing of Claudio and pardoning of Angelo show his power to carry out his vision of justice, his dealing with Lucio also reveals that he has the power to carry out his whims. The ability to enact justice seems to reside in patriarchy itself—it is easy to forget that the Duke is also a man and part of the system of power, and not merely a *symbol of* that system of power. When the Duke declares, “Take [Lucio] to prison, And see

our pleasure herein executed” (V.1.519), we realize that Isabella is in a particularly vulnerable position. Although she may not have broken any laws, she may still be subject to the Duke’s “pleasure.” The audience may view the Duke’s handling of Lucio and see a preview of what Isabella might face, should she also displease or insult the Duke. While the audience might laugh and excuse the Duke’s misuse of power in the case of Lucio, they would realize the injustice of exercising similar power over the sympathetic Isabella. The Duke may even be aware how this display of his would affect her decision to reject or accept him.

But he also recognizes that it is necessary to revise the language of his proposal. The second version of his proposal does not assume her acceptance—indeed, he acknowledges that he is dependent upon her “willing ear” (V.i.533). He says to her:

Dear Isabel
I have a motion much imports your good;
Whereto if you’ll a willing ear incline,
What’s mine is yours, and what is yours is mine. (V.i.531-534)

In the space between the first and second proposals, the Duke realizes that Isabella’s independence and agency are important to her. Rather than propose to her under conditions of obligation (as a way of thanking him for her brother’s pardon), he must make clear that he thinks of her as someone who has the right and ability to make choices for herself and that he intends to treat her, to a certain degree, as an equal partner. His description of the proposal as a “motion” might even suggest that he plans to allow Isabella to engage publicly and politically, since this is the sort of term one might sooner find in the legislature than in the bedroom. Furthermore, in the first proposal he gives the command, “say you will be mine” (V.i.488-490), and in the second he suggests that “what” is his will be hers, and “what” is

hers will be his. While the first proposal describes an assumption of Isabella as the Duke's property, the second implies an alliance and a sharing of their assets.

The question is, do we take the Duke at his word and believe that he now intends to treat Isabella as an equal? Or is this another tactic to convince her that marriage to him “much imports [her] good?” The director's choices may dictate how the audience imagines his intentions. But whatever the Duke's motive, Isabella's dilemma remains. Pierre Bourdieu in *Masculine Domination* writes that: “Being symbolically condemned to resignation and discretion, women can exercise some degree of power only by turning the strength of the strong against them or by accepting the need to efface themselves, and in any case, to deny a power they can only exercise vicariously, as ‘eminences grises’” (32). These two options seem to describe those set before Isabella. Let us use Bourdieu's text to fully explore what seem to be her two choices: to reject the Duke's proposal and continue with her plan to enter the nunnery (the choice which feminist critics generally prefer) or to accept his proposal and become a duchess.

I admit that Isabella's rejection of the Duke would signify an embrace of independence that would make me want to cheer out loud. It would be a rejection not only of the rewards a powerful man could offer, but also a rejection of her presumed role as a producer of legitimate heirs³. However, as Bourdieu notes, this rejection would require Isabella to “efface” herself, to remove herself from the world. While the nunnery might

³ Bourdieu writes: The principle of the inferiority and exclusion of women...is nothing other than the fundamental dissymmetry of *subject and object, agent and instrument*, which is set up between men and women in the domain of symbolic exchanges, the relations of production and reproduction of symbolic capital, the central device of which is the matrimonial market, and which are the foundation of the whole social order—women can only appear there as objects...whose function is to contribute to the perpetuation or expansion of the symbolic capital held by men. (42-43) If Isabella refuses the proposal and removes herself from the “matrimonial market” and if enough women were to follow her example, they could disrupt the system by which men expand their “symbolic capital.”

appear a bastion of female autonomy, Isabella would be politically isolated there. Her somewhat rebellious refusal of the Duke's offer might soon be forgotten and she would lose her ability to influence Vienna for the benefit of other women.

Productions of *Measure for Measure* have for the most part assumed that she makes the other choice, to accept the Duke's proposal. Indeed, this may be implied by the need to get all of the actors off the stage and the neatness of a procession of couples. However, the text does not demand this conclusion, since Isabella does not say one word to either of the Duke's proposals. But let us give the choice to accept the Duke equal weight (and no more than equal weight) with a refusal.

Ideologically, giving in to marriage may appear to be a complete resignation to patriarchal power—or, only slightly better, an embrace of the advantages beauty gives Isabella in a male-gaze oriented world. Equally unflattering to Isabella is the possibility that the Duke has seduced her with his power. But through an optimistic lens, these three interpretations may instead appear as attempts to claim some power for herself. If her beauty does give her influence over the Duke and other men, than entering the convent would be a surrender of that influence. Perhaps the Duke's power would seduce Isabella not because it would suggest sexual prowess, but because the possibility of accessing some of that power herself might be overwhelmingly attractive. And while accepting the Duke as a husband would require sacrificing the private autonomy guaranteed by the convent, the public and political influence she would gain might more than make up for it. If we see Isabella as focused on pursuing her own self interest, then it is for the director to determine whether her interest is in preserving her own independence or in the opportunity to secure rights for other women as well, the way she did with Mariana.

But there is another option—for Shakespeare, at least. He immortalizes Isabella as a woman always about to make a choice. Determining for her either a yes or no would in some way doom her to either political isolation or private domination, and once she makes the choice she will drown in a world of choicelessness, as either a nun or a wife. Shakespeare, in the text, leaves Isabella with the ability to choose. This cements in the audience’s mind not only the fact that women are capable of making these choices, but that we as audience members are taught to think that women have a right to make these choices. That right is granted by the Duke in a hollow way that assumes a certain outcome, but the audience can see by the revision of his proposal to her that there is a gap between the Duke’s opinion of Isabella and the capable, though trapped, woman at the end of the play. In some ways, ending the play with an Isabella glowing with potential energy sends a more powerful message than ending with an Isabella who has spent her kinetic energy, no matter how optimistic we are about the outcome. Shakespeare demands that the audience recognize Isabella as an agent, rather than an instrument, in contradiction to the way the Duke has treated her throughout the play.

But Isabella’s right to choose is most powerful not because of its ability to change the audience’s understanding of patriarchy, but because the medium of theater allows for the physical embodiment and representation of that potential. Pierre Bourdieu writes:

...the symbolic revolution called for by the feminist movement cannot be reduced to a simple conversion of consciousnesses and wills...the relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social conditions of the productions of dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves. (42)

Measure for Measure makes room for the possibility of a “radical transformation” in the future—not necessarily in the near future, but in the future all the same. The staging of Isabella’s potential energy is a display of a “disposition” that allows her to take a point of view which challenges the dominant.

But how would a director stage such an ending?

Imagine, if you will, a cast that freezes at the end of the Duke’s second proposal. Perhaps there is music. Perhaps the lighting changes to a swirling blue, illustrating Isabella’s sensation of treading water in a strong current, with a spotlight on Isabella. Another woman, veiled, dressed identically to our heroine, enters. The two Isabellas touch palms and lock eyes, then stand side by side holding hands. The lights suddenly restored, the Duke cheerfully shouts his final couplet. He leads one smiling, calculating Isabella offstage and the rest of the couples follow. With little ceremony, the second Isabella leaves the stage last, unaccompanied. The 1970 production that defied the traditional staging left Isabella onstage alone, contemplating her choice. I imagine that the staging I propose would emphasize her victimization and the lack of the choice we would wish for her—private autonomy *and* a political voice. The staging I propose does not deny the difficulty of her position, but I believe it makes clear the potential power Shakespeare gives her.

There is no textual evidence, I admit, to support the staging I envisioned above—but I believe that sometimes it is useful, as critics, to imagine how we would direct Early Modern drama for today’s audiences to emphasize certain themes and ideas for which we do find textual evidence. Isabella’s silence is politically charged. If she were to quietly exit with the Duke, a modern audience might not recognize that Isabella, in not answering the Duke’s first proposal and by inviting a second to which she also provides no answer, is performing a

certain kind of resistance. The audience might not realize that her unusual silence at the end of the play could be a cold, resentful one, calculating how to pursue her own self interest without playing into the hands of a patriarchy that proclaims it has her best interests at heart. The audience might not recognize that the laws the Duke has chosen to resurrect are specifically designed to support a patriarchy under threat. A critic can publish an article and inform other critics of a new interpretation, but a critic with a director's eye can bring that interpretation to the public at large and grant that interpretation as much influence as the original text itself.

Furthermore, as a woman still living in a patriarchal world, I find myself almost suffocated by horror that so little has changed in four hundred years. I am perplexed that this is a fight we are still having, and desperate to know why the world I was born into is the way it is. *Measure for Measure* provides for me at least a partial answer to my question.

But my questions and my disorientation lead me back to Frederic Jameson's haunting comment in "Cognitive Mapping," that: "There comes into being, then, a situation in which we can say that if individual experience is authentic, then it cannot be true; and that if a scientific or cognitive model of the same content is true, then it escapes individual experience" (349). I believe that theater provides a medium to cut down on the imagined mutual exclusion of individuality and authenticity. What distinguishes theater from poetry and prose (and film) is that it does not direct the reader/viewer's gaze. While in poetry and prose you are only presented one idea or image at a time, in theater you have a choice about where you look. As an exercise, compare the experience of seeing a Shakespeare play with reading it. When you see the play, you can choose to direct your eyes at whoever is speaking-

-this will most closely replicate the reading experience--or you could choose to closely follow one character, whether that character is speaking or not.

In the context of the quote about truth and authenticity above, I find that this freedom of gaze allows for an audience member to absorb multiple individual experiences at the same time. The viewer is aware of the individual characters' narrative arcs, but is also aware of the composite narrative of the play as a whole. I believe that a novel's ability to do this is limited by the way it directs the reader's gaze. Even if it attempts to capture multiple lives with an omniscient narrator, that narrator's gaze ultimately becomes the reader's gaze (or, at least, it is *very hard to escape this from happening*).

Theater has its downfalls, of course. The transitory nature of theater, the fact that you can't rewind or reread it, makes it difficult to analyze a live performance in detail. Perhaps what we need is a form that can combine the gaze-freedom of live theater with prose and poetry's availability for close analysis. When I suggest that we try to imagine how we would stage *Measure for Measure*, it is because in this way we can imagine the full power of the text to fill in parts of our cognitive map. We can imagine what an art that weighs the audience's gaze equally with the creator's can do for projects of understanding the complexity of enduring injustice.

It is perhaps particularly important to imagine the staging of *Measure for Measure*, since it is underperformed and intriguing in its untidiness. While *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, which are easy to find onstage, also feature strong female leads—though it might take the right director to give either of these plays the proper feminist spin—*Measure for Measure* has more to offer the conversation about patriarchy. But it lacks the memorable soliloquies that sell tickets. Drama has the advantage of surviving both on the page and in a more

immediate way on the stage—it is not a fruitless exercise, even for new historicists, to imagine how to make Shakespeare’s message accessible to future readers and viewers. Direction is criticism in action.

That being said, I find that it is intellectually irresponsible to entirely disregard the historical context in which Shakespeare wrote this play. The ending—which serves the feminist critic through its attention to the underhanded side of patriarchy—owes its bitter flavor to a failure to conform to the tradition of comedies ending in marriage. Without that tradition, the conflict over Isabella’s silence loses its bite.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that patriarchy, when Shakespeare wrote his play, was still taken for granted, whereas today it requires more effort to understand the mechanisms by which patriarchy persists and how best to undermine them. What I find most useful in *Measure for Measure* is not its explicit depiction of the ways men take advantage of women, as Angelo attempts to do with Isabella, but rather its dramatization of the subtler, more sinister ways that patriarchy tries to elicit women’s cooperation. If the Duke were to absolutely succeed in convincing Isabella that he is acting in her interest and more effectively than she could on her own, then there would seem to be little hope for women, across the centuries. What Shakespeare offers us in this ‘problem play’ is a warning against accepting too quickly the helping hand of patriarchy when we would be better off making our own choices; he offers us the portrait of an upright symbol of patriarchy with a man’s selfish needs for approval, love, and power; and he offers us a woman who learns the hard way about patriarchy’s extensive reach and allows her to live on as a woman with a choice.

Works Cited

- Baines, Barbara. "Assaying the Power of Chastity in *Measure for Measure*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 283-301.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Masculine Domination*. Trans. by Richard Nice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001. 32, 42.
- Fletcher, Anthony. "Men's Dilemma: The Future of Patriarchy in England 1560-1660." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. Sixth Series, Vol 4 (1994), pp. 61-81.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Freedom*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010. 17.
- Jameson, Frederic. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 349.
- "*Measure for Measure* in Performance." 25 March 2012.
<www.loyola.edu/measure/images/stage%20history.pdf>.
- Riefer, Marcia. "'Instruments of Some More Mightier Member': The Constriction of Female Power in *Measure for Measure*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol 35, No 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 157-169.
- Shakespeare, William. *Measure for Measure*. The Arden Shakespeare. Ed. by J.W. Lever. London: Methuen & Co, Ltd, 1965.

Bibliography

- Beauregard, David. "Shakespeare on Monastic Life: Nuns and Friars in *Measure for Measure*." *Religion and the Arts*. Vol 5, No. 3 (2001), pp. 248-72.
- Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998. 358-380.
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: Avon Books, 1968.
- Cacicedo, Albert. "'She is Fast My Wife': Sex, Marriage, and Ducal Authority in *Measure for Measure*." *Shakespeare Studies*. Vol. 23, January 1, 1995. MLA International Bibliography Online.
- Cohen, Stephen. "From Mistress to Master: Political Transition and Formal Conflict in *Measure for Measure*." *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*. Vol. 41, No. 4 (Fall 1999), pp. 431-64.
- Cox, Catherine I. "'Lord Have Mercy Upon Us': The King, the Pestilence, and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*." *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*. Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter 2008), 430-457.
- Friedman, Michael D. "'O, let him marry her!': Matrimony and Recompense in *Measure for Measure*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. 46, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), pp. 454-464
- Law, Sylvia A. "Women, Work, Welfare, and the Preservation of Patriarchy." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*. Vol. 131, No. 6 (May, 1983), pp. 1249-1339.
- Tambling, Jeremy. "Law and Will in *Measure for Measure*." *Essays in Criticism*. Vol 59, No. 3 (July 2009). MLA International Bibliography Online.
- Watson, Robert. "False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol 41, No. 4 (Winter 1990), pp. 411-432.

Biography

Johanna Evans plans to continue her study of Shakespeare, but for now is thrilled to have completed her MA in English Literature. Her primary focus is on Early Modern drama, with secondary interests in religion, gender, sexual violence and Marxist-feminist criticism. She received her BA at Dartmouth College in Creative Writing in 2010 and continues to write fiction and drama (and the occasional sonnet) in her spare time. Her three year old son, Finn, is also awakening her interest in children's literature and film. She is an active member in the women's network 85 Broads and is currently on the board of the distributing company Independent Playwrights.